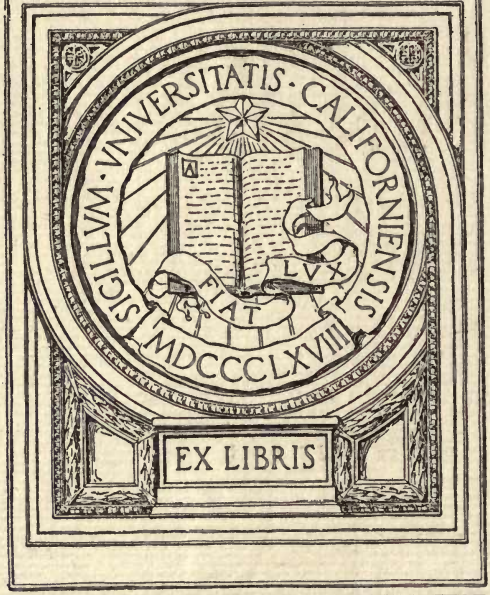
TC
425
S2E4

UC-NRLF
$B 116 319

YC107658

GIFT OF



Gaylord Bros.
Makers
Syracuse, N. Y.
PAT. JAN. 21, 1908

GIFT
MAR 29 1915

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S OFFICE
TO THE UNIVERSITY LIBRARY

EDITORIAL OPINIONS

ON FLOOD CONTROL AND RECLAMATION

WITH REFERENCE TO

SUTTER BASIN PROJECT

TC425
S2E4

The articles reproduced herewith are editorials from the daily press of Sacramento, the editors of which made thorough personal investigation of the situation now attracting the attention of the California Legislature, the State Reclamation Board, and others interested in flood control and reclamation problems established by the California Debris Commission.

G4r

UNIV. OF CALIFORNIA

(Sacramento Union, March 8, 1915.)

Big Reclamation Problem

The controversy over the Sutter by-pass, which has aroused much bitterness in Sutter county and has provoked to harsh language the opponents of the completion of the proposed flood control system along the lines laid down by the State Reclamation Board, will be one of the matters which the lawmakers who reconvene today must finally settle.

The flood problem is the great question of the entire northern part of the State. Private attempts to find a solution of this problem cannot succeed. A million acres of fertile land are useless because of the winter floods.

Haphazard methods have ruled in this work for nearly half a century and the situation has been only aggravated. Under the system of reclamation that has grown up every man is building against every other man.

Big levees are built to overtop little levees and then still larger levees are constructed by other reclaimers.

No account has been taken of the fact that the flood waters must get to the bay by some means and along some route. Every land owner naturally says: "You can't turn the flood waters on me." No one wants to convert his property into a waterway to please his neighbor.

The system devised by the United States and State engineers and embodied in the flood control plan of the Debris Commission is the first attempt to treat this problem as a whole. It takes into consideration the needs of navigation. It proposes a plan to care for all the flood waters of the Sacramento Valley.

The people of Sutter County assert that they are in thorough sympathy with the proposed flood control system. But they declare that in locating the proposed by-pass along the eastern rim of the Sutter Basin the engineers menace the orchards and homes of thousands of farmers who are now behind their own levees. They have said in their resolutions that they object to the cost of the proposed work.

The State engineers contend that the proposed route for the by-pass through the center of the basin as indicated in the Debris Commission's report is inferior to the eastern location from an engineering standpoint because of the depth of the center depression.

Furthermore, the engineers say that whether the by-pass follows the central or the eastern route, the cost will be levied on the same land. In other words, it makes no difference which route is followed so far as the cost to the farmers is concerned. The assessment will be determined by the assessors of the Reclamation Board.

The vital thing for the State of California is the completion of the flood control system so that it will reclaim the largest amount of land and do the minimum amount of harm.

No one desires to see flourishing orchards flooded. No one cares to witness the destruction of farms in order that other farms may be created.

But certainly it is not to the interest of the State to permit the fears of the people of one section to prevent the completion of a great system of flood control which aims to bring into cultivation great tracts of land now useless, and which has been designed by engineers after years of study.

Some solution of the question should be found which will remove it from local prejudice. The lawmakers should provide means for the completion of the by-pass system without constant and apparently endless litigation. Some machinery should be provided to facilitate the work in the interests of the greatest good to the greatest number.

393260

(Sacramento Union, March 9, 1915.)

Some Facts on By-Pass Plan

There seems to be much misinformation abroad concerning the flood control system officially adopted by the State nearly two years ago after the report of the California Debris Commission was made.

The people, particularly the owners of land in and around the flood district, should remember that the cost of the by-pass system will be placed against all the land benefited, regardless of the location of the waterways.

The by-pass is not a levee system in the old sense that it is a barricade against water. On the contrary, it is an artificial drainage channel.

As Engineer Bailey states it, "A by-pass is two levees and the land that lies between them."

While the promoters of a reclamation district may advance for their own advantage the money for the construction of the by-pass levees or part of them, they will be reimbursed by assessments laid on all the land which the reclamation engineers find to have been benefited by the work.

The tax will vary in proportion to the amount of benefit derived from the drainage system. Naturally the low land which would have been under water for a great part of the year will pay the heaviest tax. High land which is comparatively safe from flood will pay only a nominal tax.

The Sutter Basin Company would pay the same amount no matter whether the by-pass runs through the center of their property or down the west side of the Sacramento River. The same is true of every other foot of land in the region affected by the drainage system.

It will not save the farmers of Sutter County one cent to move the by-pass ten, twenty or fifty miles to the west, if their land comes within the area benefited by the waterway. The only measure of the tax is the amount of benefit derived.

It will be seen that the contention of some that it is not the principle of the by-pass system but the specific location of the Sutter by-pass that causes opposition is not well founded.

If it will be confiscation of the farmers' lands to build the proposed by-pass along the eastern route, then the construction along the central or any other route will be equally confiscatory.

If the farmers are right, then our proposed reclamation system is all wrong and we might as well abandon it. But the representatives of the farmers in various mass meetings have asserted that the flood control plan is right.

The engineers of the Federal Government declare it is right. The engineers of the State reclamation service say it is right, and that it will help and not hurt the farmers.

And there you are.

(Sacramento Union, March 12, 1915.)

By-Pass Plan a State Matter

While on its surface the controversy between the promoters of the Sutter Basin reclamation project and the Sutter County farmers is apparently a local matter, the fate of the entire flood control system of the Sacramento Valley is involved in its settlement.

A repudiation of the plan adopted by the State of California after years of study would practically mean the abandonment of the entire by-pass system.

The problem of the control of the flood waters of the Sacramento Valley has been under consideration by the engineers of the United States and the State of California for more than thirty years.

After the study of the question by three boards of engineers, the report of the California Debris Commission finally outlined a system of weirs and by-passes to carry off the flood waters which exceed the flow of the river five times.

The special session of the Legislature called by Governor Johnson in 1911 provided for the Reclamation Board, into the hands of which the entire problem of reclamation was given.

Under the authorization of the law and by the direct action of the State Reclamation Board and its engineers, the lines of the proposed system were located.

These lines were fixed without reference to the ownership of any part of the land. They were laid out along the contours which the engineers after the completion of their surveys decided would best serve the purpose of conducting the flood waters to the bay.

Their only aim was to protect the river and provide a way for the safe and scientific reclamation of the largest possible area of land.

All the claims and assertions of the present opponents of the flood control system, even to the objections to the specific location of the by-pass, were presented to the Reclamation Board, but in spite of all arguments that body approved the plan of its engineers.

It should be borne in mind that according to the testimony of the men who fixed the location of the proposed by-pass, engineering consideration alone dictated the line of the drainage channel.

If the local court of Sutter County or Sutter County itself has the power to put an end to the construction of the by-pass along the route chosen by the State engineers and approved by the State Reclamation Board, what assurance is there that some other court in some other county may not take the same action in reference to some other part of the system?

This system cannot be a thing of shreds and patches. It must be constructed as one big system. Each fragment is dependent on every other portion.

The aim of the engineers is not to reclaim this or that parcel of land, but to provide a method of carrying the surplus waters with the least possible damage to an outlet at the bay.

The question of the ownership of the land on either side of the by-pass is not involved. To the State of California it makes no difference who owns all or any of it.

We as a State are concerned with the problem of flood control and the broad question of reclamation.

If we are not to carry out the system of flood control designed after years of study, we might just as well drop the matter and permit the individual land owners to continue the senseless system of building against each other and fighting through the courts the thousand and one questions that arise.

The legislators either should clear the way so that the State can proceed along the line mapped out by its engineers and commissioners or we might as well abandon the by-pass plan and consign the Reclamation Board to the junk pile.

(Sacramento Bee, February 25, 1915.)

Fighting Each Other While the Floods Overwhelm All

The losses created by the floods of this month in the Colusa Basin and the Knights Landing Ridge District have been great; but the injury has been so widespread, affecting so many districts and individuals, that the warring reclamation owners may recognize the absolute futility of independent protective efforts and unite to secure the speedy completion of the only plan which spells safety for all. In that event the floods, notwithstanding the immediate damage, will have proved of actual benefit.

As it is, District 108 has 26,000 acres of seeded land destroyed, so far as concerns this year's' crop, an actual loss of $5 per acre; District 730 has been flooded, with great damage; private holdings about the Ridge are under water, as are portions of the town itself.

None of these things would have happened had the Knights Landing cut been in operation. That cut would have been completed and affording relief today, but for the opposition and litigation of reclamation landowners, many of whom are already suffering loss in consequence of the delay.

Similar conditions exist in the Sutter Basin. The Reclamation Board approved the plans of District 1500, with the reservation that its levees must not be closed for two seasons, thus allowing time for owners and districts on the east and north basin to co-operate and secure similar protection for their own property. Many of them preferred, instead, to oppose the entire flood control project and prevent or delay its completion. It is not unlikely that they also will find themselves the sufferers by their action.

District 1600, extending along the Sacramento River from the mouth of the Feather to a point south of the Elkhorn weir, was granted permission by the Reclamation Board to complete its levee system provided the levees were not closed for two seasons. This was intended to allow time for Sacramento City and others interested to construct the Sacramento by-pass and secure relief thereby for flood waters, prior to the closing by District 1600 of openings at Elkhorn weir, Butchers Break and elsewhere on the Sacramento.

Sacramento City thus far has failed to take advantage of the opportunity offered. Unless her Commission completes before December, 1915, the Sacramento weir, the city must face next Winter the menace not only of the American River floods, but also of those from the Sacramento and Feather Rivers, unrelieved by any breaks north of her.

It would seem, with object lessons of this kind, and the positive assurance from the Government engineers and all other competent authority familiar with the matter, that only the flood control project can control the river and save the valley, the warring reclamation land owners would come to their senses. They can now either continue to fight until they are all submerged, or unite to hasten the construction of the one life-raft that can carry them to safety. They may not like the members of the Reclamation Board, and they may disagree with some details of the engineers' plans; but to seek, for a reason of this kind, the defeat of the entire project, is suicidal.

(Sacramento Bee, March 6, 1915.)

Misapprehension Regarding the Sutter Basin By-Pass

A large mass meeting of citizens of Yuba and Sutter Counties was held at Marysville yesterday afternoon, at which resolutions were adopted in opposition to the Sutter Basin by-pass, as now located. A full report of the proceedings appears in The Bee's news columns to-day.

A circular announcement of the meeting, issued by a joint committee of Sutter and Yuba taxpayers, declared the by-pass, as now located, will not only mean ruin to thousands of their citizens engaged in agricultural and mercantile pursuits, but will prove to be a work of monumental folly which would ever be a dangerous menace to the entire Sacramento Valley.

Either the Federal, State or other competent engineers do not know their business, or some of the people in those two counties are unnecessarily disturbed.

It is explained that all lands in and adjoining the Sutter Basin will be fully protected on completion of the flood control project as outlined.

The closing of District 1500's levees was delayed two years to allow of co-operation of other parts of the Basin. Naturally, if some insist on blocking the work, there will be temporary danger to unprotected lands. The same thing occurs on the river when one district builds strong levees and its neighbors fail to do so.

The Sutter people say they favor the central location of the by-pass. The engineers explain that the central location by-pass, when completed, would accomplish no more in protection of various districts than the eastern one, and has various disadvantages.

The central location raises the flood plane, too, though not as much as the eastern, and the same dangers would be created in building the west levees on the central location, if owners declined to permit construction of the east levees thereof.

The official statements of the Sutter County people certainly contain a number of errors as to facts. It would appear wise to learn first those facts, and then co-operate in completion of the plan which will protect them.

As The Bee understand it, even the Sutter County engineers do not assert that the complete project as approved by the Reclamation Board will not protect all lands, including those of the protestants.

They object to a part of the project being carried out by District 1500, but have thus far refused or failed to co-operate in carrying out portions which would insure protection to themselves.

(Sacramento Star, March 2, 1915.)

The Sutter Basin Project

The Star offers no apology for favoring the early completion of the great Sutter Basin drainage project. In common with all other concerns in this city, who have the good of Sacramento at heart, The Star wants to see Sacramento a city of 250,000 prosperous and busy people and three times as many busy and prosperous people upon the farms and in the villages and towns of Northern California tributary to Sacramento.

With a soil not excelled by that of any other region in the world; with a climate surpassing that of every

other part of the world so far as the purposes of productivity are concerned; with transportation facilities almost unbelievable and with opportunities for growth such as are possessed by scarcely any other country in the world, Northern California still lingers in the forward procession.

True, the assessed valuation of Sutter County has shown an increase of nearly 100 per cent in ten years and Sacramento County has also shown a large increase in values, but after all there is not a man or woman of intelligence in Northern California who does not know that this region ought to have ten families where now we have one.

Reclamation of the overflowed lands of Sacramento River will do much to bring about this condition so greatly to be desired, and of the projects now under way or being considered that of Sutter Basin appears to be one of the most favorably conditioned.

The great fault of the Wright irrigation law was not in the plan at all, but merely in the administration of the districts. Bonds were peddled at high interest and heavy discounts and all sorts of offers were made for money to carry on the work. In most cases the districts simply fell down for lack of capital and intelligent administration. No such handicap operates against Sutter Basin. Here we have the very highest form of management, engineers, the best procurable, practically no management expense, a minimum of overhead expense, and no promotion. No stock for sale and no bids for money. As George Peltier explained in his river speech the other day, he has plenty of money to carry the project to success, although it will require several millions more to be spent in this immediate region for labor alone —but Sutter Basin wants merely the moral support of the people of Sacramento and adjoining counties.

It is but the first unit in that grand comprehensive scheme outlined in the Jackson plan by which 1,000,000 acres of swamp and overflow lands, lying in the Sacramento River basin, will ultimately be reclaimed, and instead of being a vast game preserve will be made over into homes for the people upon the soil.

(Sacramento Star, March 12, 1915.)

The Sutter Basin Project

As usual, when a bitter controversy is engenderd, the real issue is lost sight of in the Sutter Basin by-pass matter now before the California Legislature.

The proposition which the Legislature will have to decide within the next few days is not whether or not, a certain project known as the Sutter Basin, or Reclamation District 1500 project, shall be permitted to complete certain levees and canal—not that at all.

The proposition is simply whether the authority of the State of California, in relation to the reclamation of the swamp lands of the Sacramento River Valley shall be sustained or not.

The protesting Sutter County land owners insist that their fight is wholly with the so-called "Armour-Gerber project," but such is not the case. The Star makes no charge of disingenuousness against its many friends in Sutter County and elsewhere in Northern California. The men who are fighting this particular plan at this particular time are unquestionably not only honest, but patriotic citizens as exist anywhere in the State of California, but the trouble seems to be that they have not yet grasped the big, broad ideal of flood control as a State-wide proposition.

The State-wide control, is, however, just as inevitable as the tides. Nothing, humanly speaking, can possibly prevent it. As well try to stem the mighty Sacramento in flood by building a dirt dam across the river at Sacramento. As well try Prof. Zueblin's plan of turning the American by levees!

The separate boards of engineers of Nation-wide reputation, the California Debris Commission and the State Board of Reclamation have all recommended this by-pass plan after mature and careful study of the whole problem. The lines of the proposed by-passes have been fixed without reference to the ownership of land, and The Star cannot understand what possible interest will be served ultimately by defeating the plan at this time.

YC107658

TC425
S2E4

393260

Editorial

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LIBRARY

RETURN TO the circulation desk of any
University of California Library
or to the
NORTHERN REGIONAL LIBRARY FACILITY
Bldg. 400, Richmond Field Station